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'McNamara's War' in Capital

Viet Feud: The Inside Story

From the Herald Tribune Bureau

WASHINGTON.

A diplomatic cable that backfired in South Viet Nam is the fuel stoking a white-hot Pentagon-State Department feud involving high Kennedy administration officials.

The bitter background to an already inflamed politico-military situation, pitting Americans against Americans, became known yesterday as:

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara—one of the protagonists—took off with Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor after conferring with President Kennedy for 30-minutes plus.

They sped in a silver Air Force transport jet for rumor-filled, action-packed Saigon, South Viet Nam's capital. In Saigon and

in areas riddled by combat against Communist guerrillas, they'll spend a week seeking to sift out the crisis on all fronts.

Left behind, still unresolved, is the matter of the cable. It's the one sent out by the State Department the night of Aug. 24-25 that was broadcast as kind of an invitation to the Vietnamese Army to get rid of President Ngo Dinh Diem, and his brother and sister-in-law, the highly publicized Ngo Dinh Nhu.

Nothing happened. What's worse, Pentagon informants claim, Secretary McNamara never was consulted on the message.

Therefore, there's a bad black eye for U. S. policy and co-operation on both counts, these sources contend. One side of the ship of state pulled a fast one that boomeranged. The other, represented

by Defense, wants accounts to be cleared.

This is the reconstruction of the episode, as learned by the Herald Tribune:

The cable was prepared by Roger Hilsman. He's Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Mr. Hilsman, Pentagon sources contended, showed the message to W. Averell Harriman, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

Mr. Harriman was said to have approved the cable. Out it went. There was no prior consultation with Mr. McNamara, a man of icy intelligence who doesn't relish curve-ball diplomatic methods.

In some of the higher circles in the capital, the whole affair is being called: "McNamara's War."

Some of the skirmishing has already become evident in U. S. military claims

from the field in Viet Nam that the war against the Viet Cong is slowly being won. Non-military Americans have, for the most part, been claiming it's being lost.

Mr. Hilsman, once director of the State Department's intelligence department, has been at loggerheads with the Pentagon, people at the Pentagon maintain. He is called one of the "Gung Ho boys," a sarcastic term for those advocating out with President Diem and the Nhu.

Top officials at AID, USIA in Saigon and a desk officer for Viet Nam in the State Department are said to be in the Gung Ho group. The sources providing the information say they have no particular love for the present ruling regime in Saigon.

But winning the war in South Viet Nam

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